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## What should you eat before a work out?

- Carbohydrates are preferred. Liquid meals are okay too but avoid high-fat foods.
- Wait 1-4 hours after a meal before exercising. The larger the meal, the longer you should wait.
- Don't work out on an empty stomach though. A small snack such as yogurt, half a bagel, or a piece of fruit eaten 30-60 minutes before exercise will boost flagging blood sugar levels without causing nausea or indigestion.

## Nevada County Women's Conference focuses on wellness

The annual Nevada County Women's Conference was held at the 1<sup>st</sup> United Methodist Church on February 26 in Prescott. This year the banquet was renamed the Jami Powell Conference in memory of the well-loved local woman who was a cancer survivor but unfortunately fell victim to a fatal heart attack at an early age,

The keynote speaker was Randy Mac, a motivational, singer and all-around entertainer. Debbie Henderson, health unit administrator, said "his wit and humor had all of us laughing".

Dr. Alan Fox from Prescott opened the conference. He gave a talk on financial wellness



**Randy Mac entertains  
the crowd.**

which included seven great tips. He also talked about 14 recommended screening tests and explained their importance.

The last speaker was Rose Dixon, a holistic nutrition specialist, who spoke on the importance of having a balanced mind, body, and soul.

There were several tables decorated in

honor or memory of a loved one affected by cancer. The Nevada County Cancer Association set up a booth with pamphlets on breast cancer and breast self exams and included information on prostate cancer.

The registration table included a display of the 'File for Life' program to assist emergency personnel by having a medical information

sheet immediately available. For this project, participants place a plastic file with medical information on their home refrigerator in case of medical emergencies. Approximately 30 "File" forms were filled out.

Breakfast and lunch were provided for those in attendance, approximately 50. The event was funded by a Susan G. Komen grant written by Community Health Nurse Specialist Edie Greenwood.



**The women learn about holistic  
health.**

## March is National Nutrition Month

According to Dr. David Katz, director of the Prevention Research Center at the Yale University School of Medicine, 80 percent of all heart disease could be prevented with a healthy diet, regular exercise, and no smoking. A healthy diet could also prevent up to 90 percent of all diabetes and 60 percent of cancers.

To help reduce your risk of heart disease use olive or canola oil, heart-smart spreads, and eat fish twice a week, especially cold-water fish.

Weight gain is the leading risk factor for diabetes but to help maintain healthy blood sugar levels, seek out soluble fiber like that found in oatmeal,

beans, peas, lentils, apples, bananas, strawberries, brown rice, and whole-grain breads and cereals. In addition, avoid highly processed foods.

A healthy plant-based diet is your best bet for warding off cancer, along with low-fat dairy products, whole grains, normal portions, and limited alcohol.

## New programs launched in Clark County

Seventh grade students at Goza Middle School in Arkadelphia recently became more aware of the dangers of spit tobacco and smoking through the CSI/Tobacco Cessation Scavenger Hunt Project presented by Tommie Rogers, Community Health Nurse Specialist (CHNS) with the Dawson Education Cooperative. All 77 participants were students of Ms. Yolanda Taylor's keyboarding class. They were challenged to search for answers to tobacco-related questions using the "Stamp Out Smoking" and "Tobacco Free Kids" web-sites.

Rogers used the props "Mr. Gross Mouth" and "Jar of Tar" to demonstrate the damage that tobacco products can do to the mouth and lungs. The Clever Catch Tobacco Ball



**Tommie Rogers educates students on the dangers of tobacco use.**

was tossed to different students to engage them in open discussion concerning tobacco use.

Shane Eoff, Arkansas Children's Hospital ATV Safety Research Coordinator was the guest speaker at the Gurdon Rotary Club when it met in February. He talked about the ATV Safety Program funded by the Ross Foundation that is being piloted in Clark County. Several Clark County schools have been invited to participate, including Bismarck, Arkadelphia, and Gurdon.

CHNS Tommie Rogers told the group about a DVD developed by Arkansas Children's Hospital and the Arkansas

Game and Fish Commission. The video, "A Trip Unplanned", features two teenage boys riding their ATV's and shows possible consequences of not following safety precautions. It will be shown to students prior to the ATV Safety Program presentation. ATV Safety Toolkits were given to those in attendance.

Data from the 2010 AR Prevention Needs Assessment was reviewed at the Clark County Hometown Health coalition meeting in February. The group decided to use \$1500 from an Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention grant to buy ads on the radio station most listened to by teens. File of life, a program that gives emergency personnel access to important medical information was unveiled. CHNS Tommie Rogers will distribute the "Files" at the Gurdon and Arkadelphia Senior Citizens' Centers.

## Four foods that stand out

What foods should you include in your diet to improve your health and lower your risk of developing serious health conditions? The following are everyday foods that are packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and essential fatty acids.

**Nuts** - almonds in particular - are rich in vitamin E and monounsaturated fat and are a useful calcium source. They may help reduce the risk for heart disease and lower blood cholesterol levels. Hazelnuts, pecans, pistachios, walnuts and peanuts are also good choices. To control high blood pressure, the American Heart Association recom-

mends 4-5 servings a week. One serving of almonds is 1-1/2 ounces or about one-third cup.

**Berries** are high in fiber and phytonutrients. Blueberries have the highest antioxidant content of all fresh fruit. Strawberries raise the antioxidant levels in the body and also are a rich source of vitamin C.

**Spinach** is packed with vitamins and minerals that reduce the risk for macular degeneration. It's also the richest plant source of folic acid, which helps prevent birth defects and suppresses homocysteine, which is considered a

marker for increased risk of heart disease, stroke, depression and Alzheimer's disease. The antioxidants in spinach are better absorbed from cooked spinach with a little added fat, such as olive oil. You also can add it to salads, sandwiches, pasta sauces and pizza.

**Yogurt** contains more calcium than an equivalent serving of milk. The calcium, potassium and magnesium in yogurt can help reduce your risk for hypertension, osteoporosis, heart disease and stroke. Choose those with "live and active cultures."

## Community Health Nurses Specialists report

The Southwest Region Community Health Nurse Specialists (CHNS) participated in the statewide CHNS/CHPS meeting on February 22nd.

Discussion topics included ASPIRE, the Quitline, results of the Youth Tobacco Survey, and funding of another Wellness Center. They also heard a legislative update and descriptions of projects that CHNS in other parts of the state are working on.

Closer to home, CHNS Edie Greenwood and Rhonda McDonald provided CPR training in February. Greenwood offered Healthcare Professional CPR certification to four health department nurses, one school nurse, and one community person on February 14th. McDonald certified 5 school nurses and used the opportunity to share the "Teen Survival Guide" with them, review upcoming workshops, show them tobacco resources that are available to

them, and answer any questions.

McDonald also attended HIPPA Parent Night in February and gave a 25 minute presentation on heart health and "Know Your Numbers" to the 50 people in attendance.

She also asked them if they knew about Act 13, which prohibits smoking in cars with child passengers. None did but after she explained it, two said they had heard of it but were unsure of the law.

## How bad can sugar be for you?

Excerpt from "This Is Why You're Fat (And How to Get Thin Forever)" by Jackie Warner:

Sugar isn't just bad nutrition; it's health-damaging. When sugar is found in natural foods and plants such as fruit or even sugarcane, it comes in a package with the vitamins, minerals, and enzymes needed for its complete digestion. When it is in candy or sugar packets, it contains no nutrition at all. The body has to borrow from its stores of nutrients in order to process it. Sugar literally eats up the nutrients your body needs to stay healthy, depressing your immune system and making you sick.

When you have a cold, one of the worst things you can have is sugary orange juice, apple juice, or other juices. Instead, reach for the real deal and EAT the orange or apple. It has fewer calories, is high in fiber and contains the vitamins and minerals to assimilate the natural sugar while working to heal your body.

When you eat refined sugar, it goes straight to your intestines, bypassing any chemical breakdown in your body. From the intestines, it is absorbed right into the bloodstream, blood glucose levels spike fast, and your brain registers this with a drug-like reaction. Sugar triggers the release of the same natural brain opioids released when shooting heroin. These chemicals are associated with pleasure, energy, and

euphoria. It's no wonder that many addicts turn to sugar after going through detoxification.

When you are addicted to sugar, you need more to feel better. You begin to focus on getting a sugar fix. And by the way, "sugar" also includes carbohydrates that are quickly converted to sugar such as bagels, breads, croutons, rolls, crackers, etc. These foods rapidly convert to sugar and hike insulin levels as well. High insulin levels prevent the breakdown of fat.

So what does that mean when trying to lose weight? When someone is on sugar, the brain signals insulin to rush in and hold down the sugar. Glucose levels then plummet. The adrenal glands have to step in and release fat-producing cortisol to get them to come back up again. Blood sugar levels crash. You feel tired, irritable, jumpy, and mentally sluggish. And when your blood sugar spikes and drops, your body packs on fat around the stomach, hips, and thighs. As a person begins to eliminate sugar and foods that rapidly convert to sugar, the belly, hip and thigh fat will begin to disappear.

Sugar affects your body in a very bad way, and you've got to kick the habit. Indulging in sugar-laden foods sets you up for gaining weight and not feeling well. Remember, blood sugar spikes, followed by blood sugar drops, lead to tiredness, irritability, sugar cravings, weight gain, and eventually all sorts of terrible health problems.

Here's how to be sugar-free:

Get rid of sugar-free juices, sodas, and treats. They cause sugar cravings. A diet soda actually triggers your brain to grab for chips or other junk foods.

Don't allow sugar in clean products like water, tea, or coffee.

Empty your house of products with simple sugar. If it has 5 grams or less per serving, keep it. Your body doesn't even recognize 5 grams or less.

Step outside during a lunch break to kill the sugar cravings. Twenty minutes a day of rigorous physical activity releases endorphins to kill cravings.

Snack regularly throughout the day instead of eating the typical three meals a day. Feeling full throughout the day by snacking can eliminate sugar cravings!

Drink plenty of water. Sugar cravings often times are caused by dehydration.

Reduce caffeine intake. Caffeine can cause blood sugar levels to drop which lead to the body storing more fat.

Following just a few of these tips will kick your cravings, stimulate weight loss, and change your life!

## TOUCH Fitness program kicks off in Union County

Stepping Out to TOUCH Union County, an 8-week fitness program, kicked off on February 26th at the TAC House in El Dorado. Bonus points were given to the 62 people who came out for the event.

Points were also given to the 122 participants who pre-registered. Some contestants took part in the optional "Weight Loss" and "Waist Loss" Challenge by having preliminary measurements taken. Door prizes were

awarded and the group walked around the track together at the close of the program.

Four "Lunch and Learn" sessions are planned for this year's program. Attendance at them will give individuals another opportunity for bonus points. Twenty-nine people showed up to increase their knowledge on



Angie Norman (L) from AHEC-SA talks with a participant about diabetes.

diabetes prevention and management at the first one held on March 2nd.

Twenty seven teams, each with 4-8 people per team, signed up to compete this year for a total of 184 participants.

The program is being sponsored by the TOUCH Coalition of Union County.



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## SOUTHWEST REGION HOMETOWN HEALTH

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## Rethink that diet drink!

So you've given up your regular soda habit and developed a taste for the diet kind?

That's a smart decision if your goal is to cut calories but two recent studies might convince you to give it up entirely and make water your beverage of choice.

A nine-year study of about 2500 adults was presented at the American Stroke Association International Stroke Conference and showed that people who drink diet soda every day are 48% more likely to suffer a heart attack or stroke compared with people who rarely or never drink diet colas.

Another study from the University of Texas Health Center links diet drinks to obesity. Although other factors may affect results, the study showed a 41% increase of being overweight even for the group who only averaged 1 can per day. And that risk was higher for those who drink diet drinks as opposed to regular ones!

Research finds that the body's expectation of calories due to the sweet taste probably stimulates a hunger response. In addition, some argue that an insulin reaction may actually begin when food or drink is placed on the tongue. This could mean that drinking a diet cola will cause insulin to be sent into the bloodstream only to have nothing upon which to act. When this occurs, the body attempts to store fat.

Even though the connection could be explained by other, unaccounted-for factors, this serves as a good reminder that nothing beats water when it comes to healthy hydration.

## Around the Region...

**Columbia County-** Approximately 200 residents showed up for the Farmers Bank and Trust health fair held in Magnolia recently. Health unit administrator Melinda Harrell provided brochures about health unit services, as well as information on fluoridation.

**Dallas County-** The health unit started piloting the electronic health records this month. Training was held on February 16th and nurses were recently role mapped. Administrator Donna Ferguson said they are working out the bugs on some screens but otherwise it is going smoothly.

Janet Hickman, LPN went to college day at Fordyce High school where area college representatives spoke to the students on February 17th. Hickman spoke on health unit programs and also had a booth on family planning, STD's, and other public health services. There were approximately 175 youth in attendance.

Three people signed up for a Master Gardener's course which will be paid for through a Blue & You grant. In addition, the new Cooperative Extension agent also signed up. Weather permitting, the dem-

onstration garden will be tilled soon.

**Lafayette County-** Mattie Grantt, RN and Tonya Clark, RN presented information about nutrition, the nursing profession, and tips to stay healthy to 3 and 4 year olds at Making Rainbows Daycare. There were 52 students from 5 classes. Each class received a 5 minute talk on the above topics. Some of the items discussed were hand washing, covering a cough with their elbow, and examples of healthy foods. Students enjoyed the interactive demonstration of how long they should wash their hands by singing the Happy Birthday song twice.



*LIFE Coalition members gather for celebration.*

LIFE Coalition recently celebrated 6 years of Hometown Health at the Stamps City Complex in Lafayette County. Guest speaker was Fran Flener, Arkansas Drug Director, who spoke about prescription drug use in the state and the National Drug Take-Back Initiatives that occurred all over the state on September 25, 2010. Terrie Treadway, LIFE Co-Chair presented a one year look back on coalition projects and talked about upcoming projects. New Chair, Cynthia Ward was selected at the meeting. ADH and LIFE Coalition pamphlets were given to everyone in attendance. Lunch was provided by Hometown Health.

**Ouachita County** Health Unit Administrator Rebecca Wright and Rhonda McDonald, CHNS, gave a presentation on cardiovascular health and tobacco to AHOC members at their February meeting. AHOC, which stands for "A Healthy Ouachita County", is a hometown health coalition. Quitline information and pamphlets were handed out along with magnets and bookmarks with heart attack facts.